

Message Text

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S E C R E T KINSHASA 3488

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, CG
SUBJECT: ZAIRE-ANGOLA: THE MEDIATION EFFORT

REF: STATE 83689

1. DEPARTMENT'S FEARS OF AN ESCALATION WHICH COULD MOVE THE SHABA FIGHTING FROM ITS PRESENT STAGE OF A LOW-LEVEL INSURGENCY TO AN OUTRIGHT CONFLICT INVOLVING ANGOLA, ZAIRE AND THEIR VARIOUS ALLIES MAY BE WELL-FOUNDED. WE HAVE REPORTED MOBUTU'S VIEW, ESPECIALLY PRONOUNCED AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF FRENCH AND MOROCCAN SUPPORT, THAT HE FAILS TO SEE WHAT THERE IS TO NEGOTIATE. ACCORDING TO MOBUTU, HE MUST NOW CONCENTRATE ON KICKING THE INVADERS OUT; ONCE THAT IS DONE, HE MIGHT SEE SOME REASON TO NEGOTIATE WITH NETO OVER THE RANGE OF ISSUES WHICH DIVIDE THE TWO COUNTRIES--BENGUELA RR; RETURN OF EQUIPMENT HELD BY EACH COUNTRY; BORDER SECURITY, ETC. BUT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL HE NEGOTIATE WITH THE SHABA INVADERS. THEY ARE MERCENARIES AND ZAIRE'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IS NOT NEGOTIABLE.

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2. MOBUTU'S HARD LINE ON NEGOTIATIONS IS ALLIED WITH DISTURBING EVIDENCE THAT HE HAS ALREADY STRUCK ACCROSS THE ANGOLAN AND ZAMBIAN BORDERS. AND OUR READING OF HIS CAPACITY FOR MISCALCULATION--IF NOT OF HIS INTENTIONS--LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT HE COULD HAVE OTHER CROSS-BORDER STRIKES IN MIND. IN VIEW OF HIS PERSISTENT ATTEMPTS TO PROVE THAT THERE ARE CUBANS INVOLVED IN THE

SHABA FIGHTING, MOST NOTABLY HIS CONTENTION THAT FRENCH INTELLIGENCE SHOWED THAT THE CUBANS WERE IN MUTSHATSHA BUT WITHDREW TO DILOLO WHEN THE MOROCCANS ARRIVED, HE COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, USE THIS AS A PRETEXT TO ATTACK DILOLO AND TEIXEIRA DA SOUSA, PROBABLY BY AIR. WHILE WE MAY BE WRONG IN OUR PRECISE PREDICTIONS, WE BELIEVE THAT MOBUTU MIGHT WELL SEE IT IN HIS INTEREST TO ESCALATE THE FIGHTING IN A WAY THAT FORCES NETO AND THE SOVIETS/CUBANS TO SHOW THEIR HAND, EVEN IF THIS MEANS PROVOKING A CROSS-BORDER RIPOSTE FROM ANGOLA. LASTLY, WE AGREE WITH DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT OF DANGERS POSED BY STEPPED UP FNLA AND FLEC ACTIVITY AND WOULD ADD THE SOUTH AFRICAN/UNITA ANGLE.

3. THE FOREGOING DOES NOT ADDRESS ANGOLAN, SOVIET CUBAN INTENTIONS--OR THEIR ABILITIES TO MISCALCULATE--BUT WE MUST POINT OUT THAT MR. NETO AND HIS ALLIES FABRICATED A SCENARIO, "COBRA-77", LONG BEFORE THE SHABA INVASION, WHICH SEEMS DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT ZAIRE AND ITS IMPERIALIST ALLIES ARE DETERMINED TO ATTACK ANGOLA. THIS LINE HAS BEEN PURSUED AND MOST RECENTLY EMPHASIZED WHEN REPORTING THE ALLEGED ATTACK BY ZAIRIAN FORCES ON AN ANGOLAN MERCHANT VESSEL. THE AIM COULD WELL BE TO BUILD A CASE FROM WHICH A DECISION COULD BE TAKEN TO INVADE ZAIRE WITH MORE THAN KATANGAN GENDARMES. IN SUM, THE SIGNALS FROM THE OTHER SIDE ADD TO OUR CONCERN THAT AN ESCALATION MAY BE IN THE CARDS.

4. THE FOREGOING FACTORS SEEM TO US TO ARGUE FOR A STRATEGY WHEREBY THE FRENCH, BELGIAN AND MOROCCAN GOVERNMENTS WOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN TELLING MOBUTU:

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(A) THE ARRIVAL OF SIGNIFICANT HELP PERMITS ZAIRE TO PROTECT KOLWEZI, THEN STABILIZE THE SITUATION, AND GIVES IT TIME TO REFIT AND RETRAIN ITS OWN FORCES WHO SHOULD THEN BE CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THE INVADERS.

(B) FOREGOING IS BASED ON BELIEF THAT INVADERS ARE NOT NOW ACCOMPANIED BY CUBANS OR OTHER FOREIGNERS, AT LEAST NOT IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS. EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN TO PREVENT THE POSSIBLE ARRIVAL IN SHABA OF SUCH OUTSIDE FORCES AND IN GENERAL TO PREVENT A FURTHER ESCALATION OF THE CONFLICT.

(C) TO KEEP THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE'S FAVOR, THE MEDIATION EFFORT MUST BE REVITALIZED AND ITS IMMEDIATE AIM MUST BE TO PREVENT FURTHER ATTACKS ACROSS THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE BORDERS BETWEEN ZAIRE, ANGOLA, CABINDA AND ZAMBIA, FROM WHATEVER SOURCE.

(D) THIS WOULD REQUIRE AFRICAN OBSERVER TEAMS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDERS INVOLVED, AT KEY LOCATIONS. MOBUTU SHOULD ASK THE NIGERIANS TO MAKE THIS PROPOSAL PUBLICLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND TO USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH LUANDA TO ENCOURAGE ANGOLAN ACCEPTANCE.

5. THE USG AND ALL OTHERS IT CAN ROUND UP WOULD, IF THE STRATEGY WORKED, THEN BE IN A POSITION TO BRING MAXIMUM SUPPORT TO BEAR FOR THIS FIRST STEP IN CONTAINING THE CONFLICT. WE LEAVE IT TO WASHINGTON TO DETERMINE IF THE SOVIETS, CUBANS OR CHINESE BE BROUGHT INTO THIS EFFORT. ONCE THIS IS DONE, WE MIGHT ALL BE IN A POSITION TO WORK TOWARD AN OVERALL NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, AND IN THIS CONTEXT, MOBUTU MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO RECONCILE WITH THE KATANGANS AND OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS.

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